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*Political Society in Later Medieval England: A Festschrift for Christine Carpenter*. Edited by Benjamin Thompson and John Watts. Woodbridge. The Boydell Press. 2015. xii, 266 pp. £60. ISBN: 9781783270309

Over the past forty years Christine Carpenter has been one of the most influential historians of late medieval England. This festschrift is a fitting tribute to her influential and thought provoking scholarship. The volume consists of essays on a broad range of topics between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries that have been written by her peers and former students, all of whom have been influenced in their own way by Professor Carpenter's 'total' history approach to the study of late medieval England. All of the essays are the product of extensive research and many highlight areas for further research. The chapters are arranged chronologically and although there is no overarching thematic link between the contributions, the methodological influence of Professor Carpenter is apparent throughout.

Tony Moore effectively exploits the judicial records relating to thirteenth-century Essex to examine the effect that the expansion of royal justice during Henry III's reign had on English landholders. Andrew Spencer's contribution draws attention to the importance of the coronation oath in debates about the limits and extents of monarchical authority in England between 1272 and 1399. Caroline Burt's essay 'Local Government in Worcestershire and Warwickshire under Edward II' is a particularly appropriate topic since Warwickshire was the county of study for Professor Carpenter's *Locality and Polity*. Burt notes that local rivalries and disputes during Edward II's reign became increasingly bound up with national politics, drawing parallels with the problems faced by Henry VI over a century later. Burt concludes by stating that historians of Edward II's reign need to investigate the extent of bastard feudalism in that reign more extensively. The nobility are the subject of Richard Partington's contribution. Partington considers why nobles served Edward III because, on the face of it, there were few tangible rewards to be had. Royal service could be a physical, financial, administrative and emotional drain on medieval nobles yet they did serve because

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‘the king’s work fundamentally mattered’ (p. 92). The essay ultimately reaffirms the idea that kingly competence, above all else, was what mattered in getting the crown and the nobility to work as an effective partnership.

Andrea Ruddick and Benjamin Thompson focus on ecclesiastical topics. Ruddick considers the importance of the advowson in gentry litigation, particularly with regards to broader property disputes and local political networks. The essay draws attention to the importance of the advowson in the property holdings of gentry families as well as their concern that the priests appointed were of good standing. Her evidence comes from private letters of the Paston, Stonor and Armburgh families which reveal the disputes from the perspective of particular families but one wonders if a fuller picture could emerge if the records of the Kings Bench or Common Pleas were also examined. Thompson’s essay turns Carpenter’s normal methodology on its head by starting with the conceptual distinction between the body and the soul. The essay argues that there was always a tension between lay and ecclesiastical concerns and jurisdictions. In contrast to much recent thinking, Thompson suggests that the inevitable result of these tensions was ‘a single overarching authority that could contain the dualities of the spiritual and temporal’ (p. 145). Jackson Armstrong considers the use of multiple patronymic elements in the naming practices of the lowest members of gentry society in Lancastrian Westmorland. Armstrong suggests that those bearing double patronyms were situated on the threshold between the upper peasantry and lower gentry and that familial links between these ranks were recognised and noted. The essay reminds us that the rigid distinction between ‘yeoman’ and ‘gentlemen’ in the records of fifteenth-century England does not necessarily reflect social connections on the ground.

The Wars of the Roses provide the background to the following three essays. Ted Powell highlights the practicalities of the 1461 Act of Incorporation which was essentially a ‘short-term fix’ that made the Duchy of Lancaster a separate institutional entity but was tied directly to the crown, and therefore could be passed to Edward IV. Theron Westervelt provides a useful discussion of all of the contemporary manifestos relating to the Wars of the

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Roses. Westervelt highlights the broad commonalities and subtle differences between the manifestos and shows that although English society had certain fundamental expectations of good rule, by Henry VII's reign low-born were identified as 'evil counsellors' and so were the men seeking to replace them. John Watts offers a prosopographical analysis of 113 'leading ministers and policy-formers' around successive kings from Edward IV to Henry VIII, suggesting how the cultural and educational backgrounds of such men could influence the advice or counsel they gave the king. Yet, the binary categorisation in the appendix of those around the king as being of either primary or secondary importance seems somewhat arbitrary, although undoubtedly different people enjoyed different degrees of influences. Watts also notes that all of the gentlemen around Edward IV were MPs and a quarter of them were MPs before entering royal service, yet there is no attempt to explain the significance of this statistic. Does this fact have implications for the way we view the relationship between those advising and influencing the king and election to parliament? This is potential topic for future research for those interested in the nature of the late fifteenth-century parliament.

The final essay by the late Jenny Wormald provides a welcome contribution to what would otherwise have been an exclusively Anglo-centric collection of essays. The essay begins by recounting a ghost story relating to George Gordon, fifth earl of Huntly, which provides a novel glimpse into the daily life of a sixteenth century Scottish aristocrat. Wormald goes on to discuss the difference in the nature of crown-noble relations between Elizabeth I in England and James VI in Scotland, showing that James was much less concerned about the dangers of an overmighty magnate than Elizabeth was. Wormald suggests that this is an example of how Scotland fitted much more neatly into broader European patterns than England. This piece of comparative history is essential reading for all of those interested the political culture of late medieval and early modern England as well as those interested in the concept of 'English exceptionalism'.

Readers of this journal may be disappointed that none of the eleven essays has parliament as its main focus and some contributions do not discuss parliament at all. Powell's

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contribution locates the 1461 Act of Incorporation in the broader context of fifteenth-century legal developments, as opposed to a specifically parliamentary context, though this is not a criticism of his contribution. It also should be noted, however, that the index includes twenty-five separate references to a total of seventeen parliaments held between 1258 and 1495, which provides useful additional context to our understanding of those parliaments. Although it was more of an event than a permanent institution during the medieval period, parliament played a key part in the political life of medieval England. An essay that explicitly considered Carpenter's influential scholarship in the context of the medieval parliament would have been welcome. These, of course, are minor quibbles. In all, one can only be impressed with the level of research underpinning all of these essays, which makes this a fitting tribute to Professor Carpenter.

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